The distinctive Character and Honour of the righteous MAN considered,

IN TWO

DISCOURSES,

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH

OF THE

Rev^d. FRANCIS BLACKMORE, M. A.
of WORCESTER.

By P. CARDALE.

Mors terribilis est iis, quorum cum vitâ omnia extinguuntur, non iis quorum laus emori non potest.
Vera laus veræ virtuti debetur. Cic.

LONDON:

Printed for C. HENDERSON under the Royal-Exchange, and T. FIELD the Corner of Pater-noster Row, Cheapside.
MDCCLXI.

[Price One Shilling.]

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

MATT. XIII. 43.

Then ſhall the Righteous ſhine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

THESE words ſtand at the cloſe of a very uſeful and inſtructive parable, and do evidently lead our thoughts to that awful and illuſtrious day, when every man's religious and moral character will be ſet in its true light, and made manifeſt to the world;—when the eternal ſtates of all the dead will be finally determined, and an open and viſible diſtinction be made in favour of the righteous and the good, by the equitable and unerring ſentence of that ſupreme judge, who knows the ſecrets of every breaſt, and will render unto all according as their works have been.

THIS, I ſay, is that grand period, that ſolemn and important ſeaſon, to which our text refers, as appears by the preceding verſes, where our Saviour, under a lively parabolical figure, ſets forth the ſtate of the Church, or Kingdom of God, here on earth, and tells us in plain terms, what will be the different ſtates of good and bad men at the end of the world.—They now mingle and converſe together; and the difference of characters is not always viſible and conſpicuous in this life; but in the future judgment an everlaſting ſeparation will be made betwixt them, and dif-

ferent rewards aſſigned to each. The righteous ſhall appear in honour and triumph, or ſhine *as the ſun in the firmament.* The wicked ſhall ſink into eternal night, a ſtate of gloomy darkneſs, horror, and deſpair; or, as the expreſſion is in another place, *theſe*, that is, the wicked, *ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal.* (Mat. 25, 46.)

But it may be of uſe to look a little more directly into the chapter wherein is my text. At the twenty-fourth verſe, and onward to the thirtieth, incluſively, we have the parable of the *tares* and the *wheat*, which I ſhall not ſtand to recite. And, at the thirty-ſeventh verſe, we have the interpretation given of this parable by our Lord himſelf, at the requeſt of his Diſciples. He ſaid unto them, *He that ſoweth the good ſeed is the Son of man.* Chriſt, conſidered as a heavenly and divine Teacher, is here called the ſeeds-man. The ſeed ſown is the goſpel-doctrine. And *the field* where it is ſown is the *world*, or the viſible church. *The enemy that ſoweth the tares is the Devil*, or his emiſſaries and agents. Thoſe that ſuffer the tares to ſpring up, and choke the good ſeed of the word, are the *children of the evil one*; ſuch are all wicked men and hypocrites: but thoſe who bring forth good fruit are *the children of the kingdom*; good chriſtians, true and ſincere members of the church of Chriſt. Theſe muſt grow together in the ſame field till the harveſt comes, when the *Son of man* ſhall reward, and take to himſelf all who have received his doctrine, and brought forth the fruits of it. So it is here ſaid: *The harveſt is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and*

burnt

burnt in the fire; ſo ſhall it be in the end of the world. A total and final ſeparation ſhall be then made between good and bad chriſtians, or between the righteous and the wicked, in every age.—And we are particularly told, that the Son of man himſelf ſhall then come in all his glory, as judge of the world, to do this work by the miniſtry of his angels. He ſhall *gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity—then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father.*

The words, as they ſtand in this connexion, will lead us to make the following obſervations, which I ſhall diſtinctly conſider.

I. There is, and will be, a mixture and diverſity of characters in the preſent world.

II. The righteous, though there is a real and eſſential difference between them and others, are not always known and diſtinguiſhed in this life. But,

III. They ſhall receive at the hands of Chriſt a ſuitable reward hereafter, and have all deſerved marks of honour and diſtinction put upon them in the other world. *Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun,* &c.

I. THERE is, and will be a mixture and diverſity of characters in the preſent world. The good and the bad will always be found in every community of mankind: or, if we mean by the field of the world, the chriſtian church at large, as may be collected from the parable, the obſervation will be this, that there are, and will be, good and bad chriſtians in the pureſt ſtate of the church here on earth,—ſome hypocrites and formal profeſſors,

as well as ſincere and upright perſons, in every religious community.

It is obſervable, that the hearers of the word, in a foregoing *parable*, that *of the ſower*, with which this of the tares has a near affinity, are repreſented as paſſing under ſeveral *denominations*, according to the different ſoil, or temperature of the heart, where the ſeed is ſown *. The principles that are lodged and cheriſhed there, whether good or bad, will always produce different effects: for it is much the ſame in things *moral*, as in things *natural*. Every ſeed, as it contains in itſelf the form and origin of the future plant that grows from it, will produce fruit "after its kind." And, as the ground, or ſoil, is more or leſs favourable, ſuch will the fruit be that grows from it. The *produce itſelf*, and the *appearance it makes*, will be various.

And, ſo it is, with reſpect to the influence and growth of *religious* and *moral principles* in the heart. According as theſe operate with greater or leſs ſtrength and efficacy, they will of courſe ſet every perſon and character in a different light. As every ſoil, according to its nature, will bring forth fruit, either plentifully, or ſparingly †, or none at all;

* The ſeed ſignifies the doctrines of true religion, and the various kinds of ground the various kinds of hearers. Hence thoſe words in *Mark* (ch. iv. 20.) do not ſignify, as in our tranſlation; *Theſe are they which are ſown on good ground*; as if the ſeed denoted the hearers: but *theſe are they which, being ſown, receive ſeed on good ground*. The Greek word [σπαρεντες] like the Engliſh word [ſown] being applied, either to the ground, or to the ſeed. See *Macknight's Harmony*, p. 160.

† Some may bring forth thirty, ſome ſixty, and it's poſſible that ſome may yield a hundred grains for one that was ſown, verſe 23. *Mark* iv. 8. An hundred fold ſeems to ſignify the largeſt increaſe, and is mentioned as ſuch, *Gen.* xxvi. 12.

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ſo it may be ſaid of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, or the principles of religion, when ſown in the heart. In ſome they are wholly ſtifled and ſuppreſſed; in others they produce the fruits of righteouſneſs, more or leſs, according to the moral ſtate and complexion of the mind.

THE good ſeed, as it grows up, may look ſickly and unkind, and bring forth but little fruit to perfection, when the tares, on the other hand, ſhall thrive and flouriſh. The righteous and the wicked, good and bad men, of every degree, may now paſs under the denomination of *Chriſtians*. The tares may poſſibly have the appearance of fruit; or, the blade, being in appearance like to that of the wheat, may not at the firſt be obſerved.—The illuſtration, or allegory, is exceeding apt and beautiful. The ſeed that was ſown was *good ſeed*, and common to *every part of the field*, though the growth of it, or the fruit it produced, was different; and even the *good corn* was hardly to be diſcerned by reaſon of the tares that grew up with it.

AND, the viſible outward characters of men being thus various, it is no wonder, if the different degrees and appearances of virtue or vice, which are to be ſeen, more or leſs, in all mankind, ſhould ſometimes darken and miſlead our minds, and give a wrong turn to the opinion and judgment that we now form of our fellow-creatures, or fellow-chriſtians; there being many things which greatly tend to heighten, or diminiſh every character, by throwing a greater light or ſhade over it.

NOW, as this accounts for that mixture and diverſity of characters that may be obſerved amongſt

chriſtians, ſo it will naturally ſuggeſt one or two practical and uſeful reflections, which we cannot well overlook. As,

Firſt, It may ſhew us how much depends upon the diſcarding, or baniſhing from our hearts, whatever may prove an hindrance, or obſtruction, to our receiving and embracing the truth. Of this ſort, are all groundleſs prejudices, all evil or atheiſtical ſuggeſtions, all malice and wickedneſs, all pride, obſtinacy, and ſelf-conceit, all indulged paſſions, and bad examples, conſidered here as the devil's agents or inſtruments.—Theſe, and ſuch like things, have all of them a pernicious influence. They tend to deprave and harden the heart, and prevent the doctrines of true religion from making any deep and laſting impreſſions. As vegetables when they grow upon a beaten path, or upon a hard and rocky ground, and have not a depth of ſoil ſufficient to nouriſh them, are ſoon ſnatched away and devoured, or ſoon burnt up by the ſcorching heat of the mid-day ſun; ſo are the doctrines of the goſpel when they are ſown in any hearts that are ſpoiled and corrupted by bad principles. They ſoon wither and die away.

Now, theſe are the *tares*, or *weeds*, intended by our Lord in this parable, which always prevent the growth of the good ſeed, or render it unfruitful. ——Or, if we change the metaphor, the ſame may be ſaid of all *worldly cares* which, by a well-adapted ſimile, are compared to *thorns*, in the 22d and 23d verſes of this chapter, where our Saviour, in explaining the parable of the ſower, ſays, *He that receiveth the ſeed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world, the riches and pleaſures of this life, and the luſts of other things entering into*

into the heart, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful *. If we would receive the doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity ſo as to profit by them, we muſt root out, and diſcard thoſe irregular affections towards the world and fleſh, which always obſtruct a holy life, or tend, at beſt, to make men hypocrites in religion. And theſe are properly and fitly called *thorns*, not only becauſe of their pernicious efficacy in choking the word, but becauſe it is with great pains and difficulty that they are eradicated.

BOTH theſe images of the tares and thorns are exceeding juſt and beautiful.—And, as they teach us with the greateſt care and watchfulneſs to guard our hearts that we do not admit of any thing that ſhall hinder the efficacy and ſucceſs of the word; ſo, on the other hand, they plainly point out,

Secondly, The great importance of cultivating and cheriſhing good diſpoſitions, as ever we would make any proficiency in the ſchool of Chriſt, or bring forth good fruit: or, in other words, they ſhew us how much depends upon the prevalence of good affections; and eſpecially, upon a ſincere regard and love to truth, upon a humble and teachable temper, upon candour, impartiality, and ſelf-application, in oppoſition to a ſpirit of pride and contradiction, and to all perſonal and party prejudices.

THESE are the things that conſtitute a right ſtate of mind; and they are all comprized in that one ſhort and ſignificant phraſe, A GOOD AND AN HONEST HEART †; a mind that is open to light and

* Compare *Luke* viii. 14. *Mark* iv. 15.

† *Luke* viii. 15. Where our Lord had obſerved, that there is a ſort of ſoil which only nouriſhes the ſeed for a while, till the

conviction, that is unprejudiced and well diſpoſed, and always ready and willing to embrace the truth, however contrary it may be to its former prejudices or prepoſſeſſions.—This, I might venture to ſay, is the ALL in religion: for, where the love of truth rules in the heart, the light of truth will guide the practice *, and mark out the path of virtue. This is the ſoil, the only ſoil, where religion and righteouſneſs are ever likely to grow and proſper. The HEART, therefore, ſhould always be the chief ſubject of every man's culture, of every man's ſerious cognizance and inſpection. And, accordingly, we may obſerve that the diſcipline of the *heart* is what our Saviour, in almoſt all his parables and diſcourſes, very ſtrongly recommends and inculcates, and particularly, in this chapter throughout.

IN A WORD, as the ſoil of the heart is not always fit to receive the good ſeed of the word, or ſo well prepared for it as it ſhould be, nothing can concern us more than a due cultivation of it. This is fundamental to all true religion, even a teachable temper, or a well diſpoſed mind.——The ſubſtance of what has been ſaid, under this firſt obſervation, is

the ſun ariſeth, or till the thorns ſpring up: *but every one, ſays he, that receiveth the ſeed into a good and honeſt heart retaineth the word and keepeth it, and bringeth forth fruit with patience*, with conſtancy and perſeverance, notwithſtanding the trouble or perſecution they may meet with becauſe of the word, or upon the account of their religious profeſſion.

* The ſacred writings often repeat and inculcate this maxim, *viz.* That the love of truth and virtue (or which amounts to the ſame thing), an *honeſt and a good heart*, is a neceſſary qualification for receiving and underſtanding divine doctrines. "A good man does not love an error, and therefore "does not die in it;" nor will any error prove fatal but what is wilful and vincible. *Vid. Dan.* xii. 10. *Hoſ.* xiv. 9. *John* viii. 47.—x. 27.—xviii 37. 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 10, 11.

plainly

plainly this,—that, though all other diſtinctions will be reſolved into this one, *the righteous and the wicked*, at laſt; yet there is, at preſent, ſuch a mixture and variety, under each general claſs or diviſion, that the true and prevailing character is often concealed, or ſo coloured and diſguiſed, that almoſt every man, as to his viſible and outward character, and many times, even the ſame perſons, ſhall appear in a different light from what they really are.

But it is time I proceed.—What has been ſaid may ſuffice for the firſt particular, and to point out the uſe we ſhould make of it. If we would approve ourſelves wiſe and honeſt men, we ſhould put in practice the neceſſary and important leſſon which our bleſſed Lord would here inculcate upon all his diſciples and followers: we ſhould look well to our own hearts, or we ſhould ſtudy, above all things, to be honeſt and upright in the ſight of God, however we may ſtand in the world's eſteem.—Which leads me to the next obſervation.

II. *Obſ.* The righteous, though there is a real and eſſential difference betwixt them and others, yet are not always known and diſtinguiſhed in this life: that they are not is undeniable; and it plainly follows upon what has been ſaid. My buſineſs here will be to account for it: and this I ſhall do, --*partly*, by conſidering and repreſenting the righteous man's character, as it ſtands contra-diſtinguiſhed to that of the wicked:—and, *partly*, by conſidering the ſtate of this world, or the preſent condition of mankind, as they are here placed in a ſtate of trial for eternity.

[1.] If we attend to the former, and conſider the difference which ſubſiſts betwixt the righteous and

and the wicked at preſent, we ſhall find that it is chiefly an *internal character* which conſtitutes this difference, and not a mere outward appearance; or it is what a perſon is in the *ſight of God* *, [who *ſeeth not as man ſeeth*,] that forms his true character in a religious view.

Some features indeed are more *ſtrong* and *characteriſtick* than others.——And, therefore, as to the openly profane and profligate, on the one hand, and the eminently virtuous and good, the kind and charitable, the generous and diſintereſted, on the other, they are pretty eaſily known and diſtinguiſhed in this life, and we can hardly doubt or heſitate to which denomination they belong †. But, the caſe being much otherwiſe with reſpect to the *multitude* or the *majority* of thoſe who make *a profeſſion of religion*, it will be difficult, if not impoſſible, to determine with any certainty, who are the truly righteous, or the ſincerely virtuous and good: for, though we are to judge charitably of all, it is paſt doubt, that many are ſtrangers to real religion, who are yet agreed in the common profeſſion of it. And there is oftentimes ſuch a *ſimilarity* of outward character in hypocrites and others, that we cannot ſoon, or eaſily diſcern, between the good and the bad; or preſume to ſay, who are ſincere and upright before God, and who are not.

* Thus it is ſaid of Zachariah and Elizabeth that they were righteous *before God*, that God who knoweth the heart: that is, they were righteous in reality, and not in pretence. Luke i. 6.

† 1 Tim. v. 24, 25. Some mens ſins are open before-hand, going before to judgment; and ſome they follow after. Likewiſe alſo the good works of ſome are manifeſt before-hand; and they that are otherwiſe cannot be hid.

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The righteous themſelves are many times ſo diſtempered, and the wicked are ſo diſguiſed, that it is no wonder we are often deceived, and much at a loſs, with reſpect to the true and real characters of men. And, indeed, the concealed wickedneſs of ſome, and the ſecret piety and virtue of others, may be aſſigned, as one principal reaſon of a future judgment, that, however men may paſs at preſent, juſtice may be done to all at laſt.

But, as this is a matter of ſome importance; and that we may not deceive ourſelves, though we are oftentimes miſtaken with reſpect to others; I ſhall, as was propoſed under this head, repreſent the righteous man's character a little diſtinctly.——And, accordingly, I begin with laying down this poſition, "that righteouſneſs is a ſincere and prevailing compliance of the whole ſoul with what we apprehend or perceive, upon an impartial enquiry, to be the mind and will of God, whether in things to be believed or done, abſtracted from any undue regard to the opinions, ſentiments, and practices of men."——Now this ſuppoſes,

(1) A freedom of enquiry, or an honeſt diſpoſition of mind to know, and receive the truth upon due confidence and conviction. This is the firſt homage that we all owe to the Father of our ſpirits, as we are reaſonable and intelligent creatures.——And, as this is perfectly agreeable to all the dictates of right reaſon, ſo I think it is very evident from the whole ſcope and deſign of our Saviour's diſcourſe in this chapter. Or this, as I before hinted, ſeems to have been the firſt and principal thing he intended to inculcate

culcate upon his diſciples. And it is, indeed, the *baſis* and *ſupport* of all true religion: for as our hearts are bent and diſpoſed, ſuch are we in the ſight of God. An honeſt and unbiaſſed mind is always to be conſidered, as a matter of the utmoſt conſequence in all our religious concerns. If it does not always lead us, in every article, to a *right faith*, it will, at leaſt, preſerve us from all *dangerous* and *fatal errors* *. In order to find out truth in the great points that relate to moral practice an accute underſtanding is not ſo neceſſary as a ſincere and upright heart.

To which I beg leave to add——that if we not only deſire to know the truth, in order to form and regulate our conduct by it, but can, at the ſame time, candidly bear with others, in their ſentimental differences, who wear the marks of honeſty and integrity, we cannot greatly err in any material points of *faith* or *practice*.——Where theſe principles rule and govern the heart, they cannot fail to recommend us to God, and to

* See John vii. 17.——It is an obſervation of the excellent Mr. H. *Grove*, that, as righteouſneſs is the natural ſtate of the mind, ſo it has a natural tendency to brighten and improve all its faculties, is the beſt qualification for the knowledge of truth, and diſpoſes us to value it the more for the good influence it has upon practice. The love of truth is implied in that quality of the ſoul which is called righteouſneſs. The heart of the righteous man is wide, though his underſtanding, by reaſon of ſome diſadvantages he at preſent labours under, be narrow: and, where a man has largeneſs of heart as the ſand upon the ſhore, he ſhall, one time, or other, have largeneſs of mind in proportion. Righteouſneſs is the perfection of the ſoul in all its capacities, reſtores the order of the ſoul, aſſigns every faculty it's place, puriſies and exalts it, and prepares it for the enjoyment of it's proper object.

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all the wiſe, ſober, and conſiderate part of mankind. And theſe two things, if I miſtake not, viz. *Sincerity* and *Charity* are the only ſure and infallible marks of *Chriſtian Orthodoxy*.——But I proceed: what follows hereupon is,

(2) *Righteouſneſs* further imports a ſincere and practical conformity to the law of God, or the dictates of conſcience, upon a ſerious upright and impartial enquiry: or, in other words, it is a conformity, in heart and life, to that law which is the ſtandard of right, or the proper meaſure and rule of action to all reaſonable creatures. *—— As it is the part of a MAN to *think freely*, ſo it always argues a nobleneſs and greatneſs of ſpirit

* The practice of righteouſneſs is the only ſure proof that we are born of God, as vice is an unqueſtionable proof of a man's belonging to the evil one, 1 John ii. 29.—iii. 7, 8, 9. ——Righteouſneſs is, and ever was, the ſubſtance and eſſence of all religion, before, and under the law of Moſes, and ever ſince, wherever it has ſubſiſted in the world, though under different rites and forms, or under the darkeſt and groſſeſt ſuperſtitions.——It has been obſerved by an ingenious Writer, treating on this ſubject, that "the *principle* upon which men are denominated righteous is one and the ſame in all people, at all times, and in all places, even their fidelity: but the *matter* of it is as different, as the truths or things are which are repreſented or propoſed to the mind: from whence it comes to paſs that the ſame rule, whether it be conſider'd, as teaching things to be believed, or preſcribing what is to be done, *muſt*, as to it's obliging power, be limited by the capacity of the ſubject; and his ſincerity in acting up to his light, in his habitual courſe, is his righteouſneſs," Acts x. 35.——Righteouſneſs in the heart is the love of what is right, a love of truth and virtue, or of whatever appears to be right both in ſentiment and practice. Or, a ſincere deſire of righteouſneſs is righteouſneſs, as it argues a right ſtate of mind, and is always productive of ſuitable diſpoſitions and endeavours.

to be true to the dictates of reaſon, and to all its wiſe and good reſolutions. Next to our ſeeking, and *receiving the truth in love*, it ſhould be our great care, not to *hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs*. If we are in the truth, we ſhould walk in the truth, or live and act agreeably to it, and always remember that he that *doth righteouſneſs is righteous*, and that he who *doth not righteouſneſs is not of God*, (1 John iii. 7, 10.)——Religion is, in ſubſtance, our imitation of God in his moral perfections of goodneſs, righteouſneſs, and truth. And this is that in which our preſent and future happineſs does conſiſt. "We are happy, ſays one, the ſame way as God himſelf is happy, and we are miſerable the ſame way the devil himſelf is miſerable."

Righteouſneſs always ſuppoſes a principle of true piety, an inward reverence and regard to the Deity, a thorough ſubjection of Soul to the Father of Spirits, and an unreſerved obedience to thoſe eternal laws of truth and righteouſneſs which are founded in the unalterable reaſon, fitneſs, and relation of things.

Our righteouſneſs, *as men*, is our conformity to the law of reaſon, or to the law of our creation, which is the law of God. And, ſo far as we can diſcover, by the light of nature, what is truth and error, what is right and wrong, we ſhall find ourſelves obliged, as reaſonable creatures, either to embrace or reject it.—This conſtitutes that religion which is the perfection of man, and it is what every man's reaſon tells him he ſhould aſpire after.

But, as chriſtianity is the perfection of all religion, tending more than any other to the refinement

finement and perfection of the moral life, and we all now enjoy the light and benefit of divine revelation, I muſt further add, that our righteouſneſs *as chriſtians*, is a hearty and unfeigned compliance with the declarations of the goſpel, or with that more pure and perfect inſtitution of religion which God has given us by our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*.——This is the rule which God has now preſcribed to fallen creatures. It opens and explains the way of our recovery, and ſettles the terms of our acceptance with an offended Deity, and the peculiar principles of it are all admirably and wiſely adapted to reſtore our primitive order and rectitude. And, as this is that unalterable and perfect rule which God has now given us whereby to regulate our hearts and lives, ſo it will be the final teſt of every man's religious character and conduct.

In ſhort, the rule of righteouſneſs, to us, is nothing more or leſs than that entire ſyſtem of religion and morality which chriſtanity propounds, and which, even natural reaſon and conſcience will ſtrongly dictate to every upright and honeſt mind.——But, there are one or two things more that it will be proper for us to remark further under this particular; namely,

1. That *righteouſneſs*, as we underſtand it here, is a *complex term*, and imports in it a conformity to the whole, and every branch of that law which we are now under, as the profeſſed diſciples of Chriſt: or, it includes in it, not only truth, juſtice, and fidelity, but temperance and ſobriety, mercy, kindneſs, generoſity, charity, and every perſonal and ſocial virtue.——These are the *fruits of righteouſneſs* properly ſo called, or the genuine

genuine product of that good ſeed, or principle, which is fixed in the heart; or they are the *fruits of the Spirit*, and perfectly agreeable to that pure and ſpiritual diſpenſation that we are now under. They conſtitute that moral rectitude which, as *men* and *chriſtians*, we ſhould all labour after, and endeavour, as much as in us lies, to cultivate and improve.

2. AGAIN, by the *righteous*, in this place, we are not to underſtand ſuch as pay an exact and ſinleſs conformity to the law of God, or even ſuch as may *excel in virtue*, and are eminently good; but the *upright* and *ſincere*, ſuch as deſire and endeavour to do the will of God, ſo far as they are acquainted with it, or can arrive to the knowledge and underſtanding of it.

IT is ſaid, indeed, of ſome righteous and good men, that they were perfect. It is ſaid of *Noah*, that he was a juſt man and perfect in his generations; of *Job*, that he was perfect and upright; and of *Aſa*, in particular, that his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days *. But it is evident, at the ſame time, that they were more or leſs chargeable with failures and tranſgreſſions, or did ſomething or other that was criminal, in the ſight of the Lord.——Again, it is recorded of *Zachariah* and *Elizabeth*, that they walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord *blameleſs*: that is, "they were not only *righteous before God*, but they were *faultleſs in the eyes of men*; a happineſs that does not always belong to the truly righteous; they were poſſeſſed of real good-

* See Gen. vi. 9. 1 Kings xv. 11, 14. 2 Chron. xv. 17. Job i. 1.

neſs,

neſs, and behaved ſo prudently as to obtain an univerſally good character;" they were *acceptable to God* and *approved of men*; they were free from *great tranſgreſſions*; and their failures and offences of a leſſer kind were not allowed of, or perſiſted in. But it could not be affirmed of theſe, or of the other perſons now mentioned, that they were abſolutely free from all ſin, or from every obliquity in their moral conduct. The moſt that can be ſaid of them is, that their lives were of one tenor, or that they were free from thoſe *greater faults* and *vices* which gave offence to God and ſcandal to the world.

Now this, I apprehend, is the uſual acceptation of the word *perfect*, both in the old and new teſtament; and that the two terms, *perfect* and *upright*, which often occur in the ſacred writings, muſt be underſtood to mean, in the general, one and the ſame thing; or to denote the *ſincerely* and *truly righteous*, whoſe hearts are well fixed and eſtabliſhed in their duty. *Uprightneſs*, or *ſincerity*, though it may be far from a ſtate of conſummate virtue, is always to be eſteemed the *eſſential part* of a righteous man's character. The utmoſt that we can aſpire to in the preſent ſtate, is the perfection of ſincerity, and not the perfection of innocence.

And, even here, *good men*, the *beſt of men*, may be very defective; it being only an habitual and prevailing ſincerity that any man can attain to in this life. The moſt upright chriſtian may ſometimes have a ſecret biaſs upon his mind, miſleading him upon particular occaſions; nor is any man in this imperfect ſtate ſo happy as to be entirely free from ſome degree of inſincerity. What is abſolutely neceſſary to our acceptance with God, is the habitual prevalence of

good affections, and a general governing diſpoſition to do whatſoever, upon an impartial enquiry, appears to be the mind and will of God. But,

3. It ſhould be further obſerved here, and ought not to be overlooked, in treating this ſubject, that, though *abſolute perfection* is not attainable in this life, and the beſt of men are very defective in their obedience, yet every truly righteous and good man, who loves and delights in the law of God, is, upon the whole, in an *improving ſtate*, and going on to perfection.——This, at leaſt, muſt be always deemed a *mark of ſincerity*, and argues a right complexion and frame of mind.

The *righteous man* is one that ſets the law of God, the rule of righteouſneſs, always before him; and labours after an univerſal and perfect conformity to it, both in heart and life. Such is his integrity that he makes conſcience of the whole compaſs of known duty, and his habitual ruling deſire and ambition is, to follow the beſt precepts, and imitate the brighteſt and beſt examples, that he may ſtand perfect and compleat in the whole will of God.—As our moſt gracious ſovereign has given us a perfect rule, and a perfect pattern, to walk by, (which is a great advantage and help to ſuch weak and imperfect creatures as we are,) he certainly expects and requires that we ſhould labour after perfection. And the better we are, the more happy we ſhall be;—happy in the preſent conſcious ſenſe of the divine approbation, and in the expectation and hope of a greater reward hereafter.

Be it granted then, that they who have this perfection of *ſincerity*, though not of *innocence*, cannot be finally rejected of God; and that he will graciouſly accept, and not deſpiſe any honeſt man

man, though of the loweſt claſs *; yet we ſhould always remember, that ſincerity does not ſtand in a preciſe point, but admits of various degrees; and that, if we would approve ourſelves unto God, we muſt be ſtill *preſſing on*, as thoſe who have not *yet attained*, neither *are already perfect* †. An unreſerved and univerſal obedience to all the known laws of God ſhould be our ſtated aim, reſolution, and endeavour. The good man will be getting ground of his inward luſts and corruptions, ſtrengthening his good habits, and perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.

When the divine ſeed is ſown in a *good* and *honeſt heart*, though it meets with many clogs and impediments, and the weeds, or tares, often infeſt the good ſoil, yet ſtill it will be tending and growing up, though by ſlow and imperceptible degrees, to a ſtate of maturity and perfection. —As there will be always room for religious, moral growth and improvement, ſo every *truly righteous* man, who knows himſelf, would be daily making ſome progreſs in the ways of virtue and righteouſneſs. *The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light which ſhines more and more unto perfect day*, (Prov. iv. 18.)—Perfection is a plant that grows in no clime but that of heaven. And our righteouſneſs here, is nothing elſe but a daily progreſs towards that pure and unſpotted holineſs which we ſhall attain to in another life. Once more,

4. *The righteous*, amidſt their many and great weakneſſes and imperfections, are obedient to a law, which admits, and accepts of their ſincere endeavours after perfection, though in this life they come very much ſhort of it. Or, in other words, they

* Matt. xii. 20.

† Philip. iii. 12, 13.

are now accepted of God in Chriſt Jeſus, and, according to the gracious tenor and conſtitution of the Goſpel, they will be accounted of, and dealt with, as righteous, in the future judgment.——If we are *ſincere*, the Father of our ſpirits will make gracious allowances for the weakneſſes of human nature, and pardon all thoſe failures that are conſiſtent with uprightneſs, ſo that they ſhall not hinder the final everlaſting happineſs of thoſe who are truly devoted to him; and this is the effect of his rich mercy and grace in Chriſt Jeſus. O how amiable and illuſtrious is the divine compaſſion, as it is now made manifeſt in the Goſpel! How adorable is the condeſcenſion and goodneſs of God to ſinful men! as the heaven is high above the earth, ſo great is his mercy to every humble and upright ſoul. Like as a father pitieth his children; ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are duſt. (Pſal. ciii. 13, 14.) He conſiders our preſent ſituation in the world, and our particular make and conſtitution;—not only what are our natural powers, capacities, and talents, of body and mind; but all our outward circumſtances, dependencies, and alliances; what are the peculiar infirmities which attend us, and the many temptations which every where ſurround us, and will be ſure to make all reaſonable and gracious allowances. He has an exact and perfect knowledge of human nature, is perfectly acquainted with the whole of our condition, with the advantages that we enjoy, and the hindrances that we meet with, in a courſe of piety and virtue, and will be ſure to caſt a tender and compaſſionate eye upon us.——In his dealings with us, and with all mankind; in his favours and diſtributions here, as well as in the

the laſt day, he will proceed with perfect equity, and act with the utmoſt juſtice and lenity.

And, what encouragement is it in our great Lord and Maſter's ſervice, that, though his eyes are quick to behold, yet they are not ſevere to mark wherein we do amiſs! on the other hand, he will accept the ſincerity of our obedience where the perfection of it is wanting; and is always more ready to forgive, than to aggravate,—more ready to pardon, than to puniſh human frailty and imperfection.——Though the righteous, in the great and laſt day, will be judged for all the actions of their lives, and according to the *tenor* and *courſe* of them, yet not according to the proper *merit* of them. Juſtice will then hold the ſcale, but mercy will turn the balance. We ſhall be judged by the *Goſpel* law, and according to the gracious conſtitution of the *new covenant*. (Rom. ii. 16.)

Upon the whole——having made theſe obſervations, it will ſufficiently appear how we are to underſtand the character in my text.———And, (by the way,) this deſerves the particular notice and attention of thoſe who are going to partake in the ſolemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper. You are to recollect then, as a ſhort ſummary of what has been ſaid,——as follows, " that the " righteous are ſuch as labonr to have their minds " free from the undue biaſs of luſt and paſſion, " and of every unreaſonable prejudice. They " are ſincerely deſirous to know, and to do " the will of God. They have a prevailing " love to truth, and a religious and ſtrict re- " gard to the dictates of conſcience: and they " make it their conſtant care to walk ſo as to " pleaſe God, and keep his commandments al- " ways.——Not that we are to conceive of them

" as perfectly holy, or abſolutely free from ſin,
" but as upright and conſcientious perſons, ſuch
" as live in the fear of God, and are ſincerely de-
" voted to his honour and ſervice: or, if they
" at any time fall into *greater tranſgreſſions*, they
" are deeply humbled, and are never eaſy till they
" riſe again by a ſpeedy and ſincere repentance.
" They may be very defective in their obedience,
" and be guilty of many negligences and omiſſions,
" but ſtill they have a *reſpect to all God's command-*
" *ments*, as holy, juſt, and good. They have no
" ſecret, or ſtated reſerve, in favour of any ſin;
" no ſettled, or fixed averſion, to any inſtance of
" duty, or branch of holineſs. They are dying
" unto ſin, and going on to perfection; and,
" through the grace of the goſpel, or the mercy
" of God in Chriſt Jeſus, they are accepted as
" righteous now, and will be abſolved and ac-
" quitted in the day of judgment. In a word,
" they are ſuch as live under the habitual and
" prevailing influence of religious principles, and
" make it their daily care, ſtudy, and endeavour,
" to keep a good conſcience in all things."

UNDER this *Epithet* we may include, not only thoſe that are more eminent and conſpicuous for their piety and virtue, their extenſive charity and uſefulneſs, but thoſe of a lower claſs, and whom in our common ſpeech, and, in the judgment of charity, we uſually ſtile *good men*, that is, ſuch as are righteous in the ſight of God, however they may be eſteemed and thought of in the world, or be treated by their fellow-creatures.

AND thus, if we take a view of the righteous man's character, as contra-diſtinguiſhed to that of the wicked; and conſider, that it is chiefly an *internal*, and, at the beſt, far from being a *perfect*

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and *ſinleſs character*, we may pretty eaſily account for it's not being ſo open and viſible now, as it will be hereafter. Or, the real and intrinſic difference being not ſo eaſily diſcerned at preſent, it is no wonder they often paſs through this world, *unnoticed* and *undiſtinguiſhed*.

But this point may be farther illuſtrated by attending to the *ſtate of this world*, or to the *preſent condition* of mankind, as they are here placed in a ſtate of trial for eternity: which was propoſed to be conſidered as the next thing in order: but this, with what remains, God willing, muſt be the ſubject of another diſcourſe.

MATT. XIII. 43.

Then ſhall the Righteous ſhine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

DISCOURSE II.

THE following obſervations have been propoſed in treating upon theſe words, viz.

I. There is, and will be, a mixture and variety of characters in the preſent world.

II. The righteous, though there is a real and eſſential difference betwixt them and others, yet are not always known and diſtinguiſhed in this life. But,

III. They ſhall receive at the hands of Chriſt a ſuitable reward hereafter, and have all due honour and diſtinction put upon them in the other world.

Under the *ſecond* of theſe, I propoſed to ſhew, whence it is that truly righteous and good men are not always known and diſtinguiſhed in the preſent world. And this I have partly attempted already, by conſidering the diſtinctive character of the righteous man, as it is here oppoſed to that of the wicked. And, I ſhall now further illuſtrate this point,

[2] By adverting to the ſtate of this world, or to the preſent condition of mankind, as they are here placed in a ſtate of trial for eternity.——To make a viſible diſtinction, in this life, betwixt the righteous and the wicked, would be inconſiſtent with

with the wiſdom of providence in the ſtanding and ordinary courſe of things in the preſent world. All, without exception, are now in a ſtate of diſcipline and forbearance, where various methods of inſtruction, correction, and moral ſuaſion, are employed and made uſe of both with the good and bad.——Thoſe that are wicked, at preſent, may be reclaimed and reformed: their hearts may be cultivated, meliorated, and prepared to receive the good ſeed: thoſe that are yet unſound may become ſincere members of the chriſtian church; and are therefore not to be extirpated by perſecution, or by any acts of rigour and ſeverity. As the *righteous* may turn from his *righteouſneſs and die*, ſo the *wicked* may turn from his *wickedneſs and live* *. The preſent ſtate is not final, and deciſive with reſpect to any.——And this, being only a ſtate of probation, in order to a ſtate of retribution, no raſh judgment, or definitive ſentence, ſhou'd be now paſſed upon any part of mankind, or any violent methods made uſe of to ſeparate the *tares* from the *wheat*. Men may do a great deal of miſchief by undertaking what they are by no means fit for, and have no warrant to undertake. Church power and authority is for *edification*, and not for *deſtruction* †, nor ſhould the miniſters of Chriſt ever employ any meaſures, under a pretence of purifying the church, but what are mild and gentle ‡.

It is undoubtedly, for wiſe reaſons, that the great Governor of the world now bears with men for ſome time, and allows them a proper ſpace for trial, before he rewards or puniſhes them. And, as he has not ſeen it meet in the preſent ſtate to

* Ezek. xviii. 21, 24.
† 2 Cor. x. 8.
‡ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

make

make a conſtant and viſible diſtinction between the good and the bad, in *his* treatment of them; but exerciſes great patience and lenity towards all, *we* ſhould learn from hence to exerciſe the greateſt moderation, patience, candor, and charity one towards another; and not take any unhallowed methods to ſuppreſs what we may think to be error, or haſtily condemn thoſe practices which to us may have the appearance of evil.——Too many take upon them to judge before the time comes, and are ready to put in the ſickle before the harveſt is ripe: the ſervants in the parable were in great haſte to gather up the tares and burn them: but this muſt not be: the wiſe Huſbandman forbids it, leſt through their unſkilfulneſs the good wheat ſhould be trodden down or rooted up. There is no infallible judge, proper to execute this taſk at preſent, none that can diſcern the *hearts* of men: the *tares* muſt, therefore, ſtand for a while rather than endanger the *wheat*. (verſes 28, 29.)

Nor, are the righteous, on the other hand, to be gathered in, or ſeparated from the wicked, till the harveſt comes. The ſupreme, all-wiſe Ruler and Judge of the world, has determined otherwiſe. ——This is no leſs agreeable to the œconomy of providence in the preſent life, which has ordained, that the virtuous, and the ſincerely good, ſhould dwell and converſe with hypocrites and evil men, as a trial of their faith and patience, their integrity, fortitude, and conſtancy of mind; that theſe, and their other virtues, may have the greater room to exerciſe and diſplay themſelves.——The righteous often meet with much ill uſage and hard treatment from the world, not only from the ungodly and profane, and thoſe who are the profeſſed enemies to all virtue and ſobriety, but even from thoſe with whom

whom they have a religious conexion, as members of the ſame church, or ſociety, to ſay nothing of the uncharitable cenſures and anathemas, of many weak and miſtaken zealots, who are actuated by blind rage and bigotry.

Now, theſe, and ſuch like things, I obſerve, as they are no ſmall exerciſe and trial to good men, in this world, ſo they often contribute not a little, by the diſpoſitions of a wiſe and good providence, to excite their graces, and to brighten and improve their virtues. They are hereby admoniſhed, and taught many uſeful leſſons of humility, charity, prudence, and circumſpection. They grow more indifferent to this world, and are better fitted and prepared for another.———What has been ſaid thus far may help us to account, in ſome meaſure, for the mixed and diverſified ſtate of good men in this world. It is a ſchool of diſcipline, in which men are to be inſtituted in virtue, and trained up and inured to the exerciſes of it, in order to their being hereafter advanced to a more ſublime and perfect exiſtence. They are not placed here, as in a country deſigned for their paradiſe, or their heaven; but, as in a ſtate of probation, under moral diſcipline and tuition.

And, beſides this, we ſhould further obſerve, that the common and ordinary diſtributions of providence in this life, are ſo far from giving us any true light or certainty, with reſpect to the religious characters of men, that they ſeem rather to throw an obſcurity and darkneſs over them. Good men now ſuffer with the wicked; nor are the beſt of men exempted from the common lot of outward temporal evils, and bodily afflictions, or from thoſe deſtructive and calamitous events which ariſe from the original frame and texture of this world. Theſe equally affect the good and the bad, the juſt man

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and the ſinner. *All things come alike to all*, as the wiſe Preacher has obſerved, and *there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked**. Nay, the righteous are ſo far from being always diſtinguiſhed by the viſible and outward favours of heaven, that they often appear to lie under the frowns of providence more than others. Proſperity and affliction are not always the certain effects of God's love and hatred, or the conſtant marks of his favour and diſpleaſure: ſo that no certain judgment can be formed of mankind by what befalls them in the preſent life.

And, yet, I would not be ſo underſtood, as if God never made any remarkable difference in this world between the righteous and the wicked. All ancient and modern hiſtory ſhews the contrary. As the wicked have been ſometimes puniſhed, and ſet up as the monuments of the divine diſpleaſure, ſo there have been many inſtances of God's merciful care and protection over good men, and thoſe who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their virtue and piety in a diſſolute and degenerate age, ſuch as *Noah*, *Lot*, *Joſeph*, *Moſes*, *Daniel*, and others.

But, not to deſcend here to particular examples, which, as they are too numerous to recite, ſo it would be needleſs to inſiſt upon them. It ſhall ſuffice to obſerve, that we may now ſee enough to vindicate the ways of God to men, and to anſwer and ſilence all objections that may be made againſt providence. God ſometimes ſeparates the *precious* from the *vile*, the *veſſels of honour from* thoſe *of diſhonour*, and preſerves them from thoſe calamities which befall others in this world. Or, in the words of the prophet, we may now ſometimes *diſcern*, pretty clearly diſcern, between the *righ-*

* Eccl. ix. 2. Matt. v. 45.

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teous and the wickd, between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not *.

But this is not always the caſe. The great and wiſe God has not thought this a proper time, or place, to make ſo viſible a diſtinction between the righteous and the wicked, as their different diſpoſitions and actions require. And, that ſome perſons ſhould be ſuffered to grow ripe for vengeance, while others are growing up, and ripening for a ſtate of happineſs, and that, by the uſe or abuſe of the very ſame means, is perfectly agreeable to our wiſeſt and beſt notions of God and providence. Though,

After all, the full reſolution of that queſtion, "why are the righteous caſt down? or wherefore "does the way of the wicked proſper?" which has ſo often perplexed many pious and good men, muſt be reſerved to another day.——It would, however, anſwer every practical and uſeful purpoſe, to conſider, that, though the providence of God may prove to *us*, but a doubtful and uncertain guide with reſpect to the knowledge of *others*, yet every man's own conſcience is a proper and com-

* Malachi. iii. 17, 18. The particular caſe, or fact, here pointed at, ſeems much to our preſent purpoſe. "It was very remarkable, and was certainly a moſt ſignal act of providence, that none of the Chriſtians periſhed in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*:" So true and prophetic was that aſſertion of St. *Peter*. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, *&c.* (2 Pet. ii. 9.)——We are told by eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, that thoſe who at that time believed in Chriſt, being warned by our bleſſed Lord, left *Jeruſalem*, and removed to a ſmall town called *Pella*, and ſome other adjacent places beyond Jordan, where they eſcaped the ſhipwreck of their country, and the deſtruction that awaited and overtook the unbelieving Jews. And, we don't read any where, that ſo much as one of them periſhed in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*. Vid. Dr. *Newton*'s Diſſert. on the Prophecies, Vol. II. Diſſ. xviii. p. 234, &c.

petent

petent judge with reſpect to *himſelf*. We may know ourſelves, when we know but little of others: and our preſent hopes and fears, as we either do well or ill, or as conſcience now, either accuſes, or excuſes, are perfectly agreeable to this preſent world, conſidered as a ſtate of trial, and to our natural freedom and liberty as moral agents.

To cloſe this head; though we may come to the knowledge of ourſelves, or of our own ſincerity, which to us is a matter of the greateſt importance, yet we ſhould ſtill remember that it is only the light of another world that can reſolve our doubts, or rectify the miſtakes that we may here labour under with reſpect to others. Our preſent darkneſs and error is what ariſes from the preſent condition of this world, and the imperfect ſtate of good men in it. Which leads me to obſerve,

III. Though the righteous may not always be known and diſcerned, or be honoured and eſteemed in this world, as they deſerve, yet the time is coming when they ſhall be treated and diſtinguiſhed with all due marks of honour and reſpect by the great Lord and Judge of all: Or, in the language of the royal Pſalmiſt, He will then *bring forth their righteouſneſs as the light, and their Judgment as the noon day*. (Pſal. xxxvii. 6. He will then make it to appear that they are honeſt men, and that is honour enough. This was our laſt general obſervation from the words. The righteous and the good, the holy and the upright, ſhall *ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father*. They ſhall ſhine with immortal glory, and enjoy unſpeakable happineſs in the preſence of God. That internal and real character, of which I have been ſpeaking, in a former diſcourſe, ſhall then be notified to their everlaſting honour and praiſe. I ſhall endeavour

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to open and illuſtrate this part of my ſubject in the order following.

(1) THE characters of the righteous, as well as the wicked, will then be diſcovered, and the difference betwixt them be made manifeſt. To this end, we are told, that, when the harveſt is ripe, there will be a general gathering and ſeparation made by the *angelic miniſters* or reapers, who ſhall then be employed, and ſent forth, to gather the *elect*, and *ſever the wicked from among the juſt* (ver. 41, 49.) And, elſewhere, our Lord tells us, that when *the Son of Man ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory, and before him ſhall be gathered all nations*, and *he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as the ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from the goats: and he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* (Mat. xxv. 31, 32, 33.)

THERE will be an univerſal collection, and a ſtrict ſeparation made, of all mankind, of all who have ever acted as moral agents upon this globe, and of all who are now in a ſtate of trial. There will be a reſurrection of all the dead, both of the juſt and the unjuſt: and we muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt. The good and the bad, the juſt man and the ſinner; perſons of all ſorts, of every character, of every denomination, and every age, in all the ſucceſſive generations of mankind, from the beginning of the world to its lateſt period, ſhall appear on this mighty theatre, and be convened before the righteous tribunal of the great Judge.

AND, they ſhall be all properly diſtinguiſhed, and duly aſſorted.——The tares and the wheat ſhall no longer ſtand in the ſame field; the ſheep and the goats ſhall no longer fold together; but a ſeparation, a viſible and awful ſeparation, will be

be made between them.——And this ſeparation will, doubtleſs, make a ſufficient and clear diſcovery, as to every man's character.

Or, when all mankind are thus placed and diſpoſed in the preſence of the Judge, it will then appear, who, and what they are, and to whom they belong. It will then be known who are impoſtors and deceivers, and who are not; who are the children of perdition, and who are the heirs of life and immortality; who are the children of the kingdom, and who are the children of the wicked one. (ver. 38.) We may then be certain, who are the faithful ſervants of God, and who they are that love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. Every man's work, every man's doctrine, ſhall then be made manifeſt, or tried and diſcovered, of what ſort it is. (1 Cor. iii. 13.) It ſhall then be known, who are atheiſts, hereticks, and apoſtates; who are the falſe and unſound: and who are the faithful and true members of the chriſtian church. Every heart, and every thought of wickedneſs, ſhall then be revealed. The formal profeſſor and the cloſe hypocrite ſhall then be known, and all his inſincerity and falſhood detected. No preſent diſguiſe or artifice will then ſerve his turn; nor will he be able any longer to impoſe upon himſelf, or put a cheat upon others. The day of the Lord, that great and notable day, will ſet every perſon and character in a true light.

It is ſaid of Jeſus, in the days of his fleſh, that he *knew all men*; who were his diſciples indeed and in truth; and *needed not that any ſhould teſtify of man, for he knew what was in man*, (John ii. 25.)——And we may be ſure, that as he is the appointed Judge in that great aſſize, he will need no witneſs, as in human courts, no confeſſion or information from the parties themſelves,

or from others. It is highly probable, as I now hinted, that the ſeparation itſelf, or the manner of it, will ſufficiently point out every man's character, ſo far as we are concerned to know it *.—— This is certain, that the proceſs and rule of judgment will be perfectly right and unexceptionable, though we know but little, at preſent, as to the manner and circumſtances of it. We may be ſure that the great God will then clear up all thoſe appearances of providence to full ſatisfaction which are now obſcure or miſtaken, and that no ſecret vice or virtue ſhall be overlooked, or any ſingle circumſtance be unnoticed by the righteous and omniſcient Judge, in determining the ſtate and condition of every individual in that day. This I ſay may ſuffice us, and it is all that is neceſſary to give our faith in this grand article the moſt powerful and happy influence.

We ſhould often conſider, then, and ſeriouſly call to mind, that, however the righteous and the wicked may now mingle together, and lie undiſtinguiſhed, that will be a day of great diſcrimination, a day that will make ſtrange diſcoveries:

* It is highly improbable, that every thought and action of a man's life will be diſtinctly and publickly mentioned, and every particular ſinner tried ſeparately. It is the obſervation of a very worthy and ingenious writer, (and he thinks the ſuppoſition comes up to the juſt and full meaning and ſenſe of ſcripture upon this head) " that every perſon ſhall, before the tribunal of Chriſt be placed in a rank or degree of glory and honour, or of ſhame and infamy, in the view of all, exactly anſwering to his real goodneſs or viciouſneſs, whether ſecret or open; and that in allotting every one his ſtation, his moſt ſecret ſins, or virtues, ſhall not be forgotten by the Judge, but be preſent to his view, and influence his diſpoſal. See Amory on the future Judgment, Serm. V. where the reader will meet with much juſt and clear reaſoning upon this ſubject.

for many will then appear, both on the right, and left hand of the Judge, to the great amazement of the world about them, and contrary to all expectations concerning them.

And this will be equally true, not only of thoſe whom we ourſelves have known and converſed with in this world, but of others who have lived in darker times, and been favoured with leſs advantages. Many ſhall come, as our Saviour himſelf tells us, from the *eaſt*, and from the *weſt*, and from the *north*, and from the *ſouth*, and ſhall ſit down in the kingdom of God: ſo that the diſtinction which will be then made by the great Judge, will be very different from what it now is, in the opinion and judgment of men.

Many who ſeem now inferior to others, in reſpect of outward privileges, and are accordingly deſpiſed, as mean and contemptible perſons, ſhall exceed others in the glory and happineſs of God's eternal kingdom. And many, on the other hand, who ſeem to have the preference in external privileges, ſhall fall ſhort of the reward and honour they expected *: and all for want of integrity and

* Men will be judged according to the different times in which they have lived, according to the different circumſtances in which they are placed, the various degrees of light and aſſiſtance with which they were furniſhed, and the different uſe and improvement they have made of the means and helps which God has afforded them.——And, if we conſider theſe, and the like circumſtances, it will be hard to determine, as a learned writer has obſerved, who ſhall be greateſt in the kingdom of heaven, thoſe who have lived in the times of our Saviour, and heard the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth, and ſaw the wonderful works that he did, or thoſe who have lived under the obſcurer revelations of the divine will, and in the dark places of the earth, and yet have arrived under all their diſadvantages for religious knowledge to an eminence in all virtue and holineſs.

and a due improvement of the light and advantages which God afforded them.

THE final judgment of the laſt day will cancel and annul all our preſent narrow and falſe notions of mankind. Every nation ſhall ſend ſome members to this great convention. Every country will afford ſome faithful ſervants of God to ſit down with him in his kingdom. Heaven is a place of general rendezvous for all virtuous and good men, a garner that will receive all righteous ſouls without exception, let them come from the uttermoſt parts of the earth, or from any quarter of the world.

NOT only ſhall our departed friends, who now ſleep in Jeſus, meet with thoſe who are yet alive, and part no more: but thoſe, I ſay, whom we never knew in the fleſh, ſuch as the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets* of ancient times, the *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors* of the chriſtian church, and all righteous and

neſs. See Dr. *Lardner*'s Serm. Vol. II. Serm. V. p. 148.—— And for this reaſon, ſays another, let no man ſink in our eſteem, or become the object of our contempt, merely becauſe he thinks differently from us; but wherever true virtue and integrity are found, let it be loved and revered. Whoſoever places the true moral worth and excellence where it ought to be placed, I mean, not in the ſoundneſs of the head, but in the ſoundneſs of the heart, will eaſily diſcern how poſſible it is for one profeſſor that is furniſhed with the ſcantieſt ſtock of knowledge to be a far better, worthier and more amiable character in life, than another who is poſſeſſed of the greateſt; and, if God in the day of retribution will render to every man according to his works; for the ſame reaſon it is not impoſſible, after all our boaſted advantages in point of knowledge, but that a man caſt upon the moſt barbarous and illiterate part of the globe, may come off with more applauſe at that impartial tribunal than our *Clarks*, *Newtons*, or any other the moſt diſtinguiſhed characters whether of the philoſophic, religious, or civil kind. Dr. *J. Scot*, Vol. II. Serm. XX. p. 415, 416, 417.

good men of every age: theſe ſhall all meet and aſſociate together with us, and be for ever with the Lord.——Nay, even thoſe, from whom our af, fection has been, in too great a meaſure, alienated through ſome unhappy miſtakes and prejudices, ſhall join with them and us, and ſhare in the common joy and felicity of the future kingdom. All true chriſtians, however they may be divided in their opinion, or in their way of worſhip and communion now, ſhall then aſſemble and meet together in perfect love and charity: however cenſorious and uncharitable they might have been one towards another in this world, they ſhall all be owned and received by a merciful God, and united together at laſt. Or, in the language of the Apoſtle, they ſhall be all *gathered together unto Chriſt*, and dwell together in the kingdom of their Father. All the righteous ſhall enter into the joy of their Lord, whilſt all the wicked ſhall be put away like droſs, or be as the chaff which the wind driveth away and the fire conſumeth.

THIS will be immediately conſequent upon that grand diviſion which will be then made of all mankind under two different claſſes, according to their different characters, good or bad. And the final and deciſive ſentence, which ſhall then be paſſed, will perfectly correſpond with it. Which leads me to obſerve

(2) THEIR condition will be determined and fixed by the righteous and impartial Judge of the world. As every man's character will be then diſcover'd, ſo every man's ſtate will be then determined. Whilſt all the wicked and ungodly world are, by a judicial and unalterable ſentence, conſigned over, with all the marks of infamy and diſgrace, to a ſtate of miſery and deſtruction, and are utterly cut off from all hopes of happineſs

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in the kingdom and preſence of God, the righteous, on the other hand, ſhall have all proper and deſerved marks of honour and diſtinction put upon them. They ſhall enter into life eternal, and partake of the higheſt honour and felicity: Or, in the language of the text, they ſhall then ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father.

MANY are the repreſentations which are given us in Scripture of the heavenly ſtate, the happy and bleſſed abode of righteous and good men, in the other world; and we are greatly indebted to revelation for that help and aſſiſtance which it affords us in our conceptions of it; though after all, we ſhall know but in part, and be incapable of forming a full and adequate notion of it, in the preſent embodied ſtate. Neither men, nor angels, can fully repreſent to our minds, what God hath prepared for them that love him.—In this world, where our ideas are chiefly, or wholly taken from ſenſible things, and outward objects, we can only think and talk in metaphors, and low ſimilitudes, of another world.——We may juſt remark, that it is frequently ſpoken of in Scripture, under the notion of life, the moſt valuable bleſſing, and the foundation of all others that we enjoy: ſometimes, as a place of *reſt* and *repoſe*, a magnificent *city*, a ſumptuous *banquet*, a *marriage feaſt*, the *paradiſe of God*, a place of unutterable, inconceivable pleaſure and delight, and the like. All which alluſions are deſigned to intimate, no doubt, " that there is no ſort of joy, or ſatisfaction, whereof we are capable in the future ſtate, but what will be conferred upon us in its utmoſt perfection.

BUT, it would be tedious to inſiſt upon the many ſtriking figures which the inſpired writers have employed upon this ſubject. The text, perhaps, will ſet before us one of the brighteſt ima-

ges we any where meet with.——It ſhall, therefore, ſuffice to obſerve, that it is here called,

In the firſt place, a KINGDOM. And, ſuch a Kingdom it is, for the laws and cuſtoms, the honours and immunities of it, that no earthly kingdom can be compared with; a kingdom of peace, affluence, and grandeur, and ſecure from all convulſions; a durable and everlaſting kingdom; moſt wiſely framed and conſtituted; where all the ſubjects are happy in the preſence and enjoyment of God; and where they all live in delightful intercourſe and perfect harmony one with another.——And, what honour and felicity does this idea of heaven carry in it?—The kingdom, which the Saints ſhall enjoy hereafter, is perfectly ſerene, and far remote from the inclemency and horror of theſe lower regions. The *empyrean* ſeat, the heaven of the righteous, is beyond the ſhade and projection of any dark bodies here below. The kingdom, which they now look and wait for, is a kingdom of light and purity, of order and tranquility, where love and charity reign triumphant, and God himſelf will be all in all. Under his protection and favour, and the ſmiles of his countenance, the inhabitants of that world, the ſubjects of that kingdom, here ſpoken of, will be happy and bleſſed for ever.——In a word, ſuch is the honour and felicity of the heavenly kingdom, that it infinitely exceeds all our ideas of earthly grandeur and glory. But, to endear it yet more, if poſſible, to all righteous and good men.

Secondly, It is here called the *Kingdom* of their FATHER: for the Kingdom is originally his: He has provided and prepared this inheritance for them. It is the Father's good pleaſure to give them a kingdom. The righteous are *bleſſed of God* the Father, and ſhall enter into his kingdom, whilſt all

all the wicked are *accurſed of God*, and ſhall be for ever excluded from it. We are told, that the gift of God is *eternal life*. He has implanted in mankind a deſire and thirſt *after happineſs and immortality*; and the regular, wiſe, and ardent thirſt of the righteous, ſhall be fully ſatisfied in another and better ſtate of exiſtence. God is their *Father*; and the very name of a father denotes the higheſt affection. He is both able and willing to do for us above all that we aſk or think. It is therefore a kingdom that ſhall be aſſuredly given to all thoſe for whom it is prepared by the father. As he is the Lord of the kingdom, and bears an affection to all his children, they are, upon this account, as well as by his own gracious promiſe, ſecure of this bliſsful inheritance. They are not only *heirs of God*, but *co-heirs with Chriſt*, and ſhall ſhare with him in the felicity and glory of his kingdom.

HERE there are many manſions and different abodes of grandeur and glory, worthy of that ſupreme and infinite majeſty who reſides there, and which are now appointed and marked out for the righteous and the faithful, and all the humble followers of Jeſus.——And, of this we are expreſly aſſured by our Lord himſelf. *Father, I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me*, (and all good chriſtians are given him) *ſhall be with me where I am to behold my glory* *. And, how reviving and tranſporting are thoſe words of the merciful Redeemer! *I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me* †? Again; *to him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me on my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father on his throne* ‡. And to the ſame purpoſe, are

* John xvii. 24. † Luke xxii. 29.
‡ Rev. iii. 21.

the words of Saint John: *Beloved*, (ſays he,) *now are we the Sons of God*, amidſt all the contempt and perſecution that we meet with in this world, *but it does not yet appear how glorious and happy we ſhall be hereafter*; for *we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is*, ſee him in all his glory, and, as his beloved brethren, partake of immortal glory and felicity with him *.

THUS we are to conceive of the future kingdom. It is the kingdom of God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Father and friend of all truly righteous and good men.—And, to heighten and exalt our apprehenſions, ſtill farther, it is here added,

Thirdly, They ſhall ſhine forth as the SUN the moſt glorious of all viſible Beings. Some have thought that our Lord, in this beautiful expreſſion, alludes to that paſſage in the prophet Daniel. (ch. xii. 2, 3.) *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever.* And it muſt be owned, that, though the phraſe or manner of expreſſion, in the two places, be ſomewhat different, yet the ſcope and deſign of the metaphor is much the ſame. The paſſages are ſimilar; and the import of both is plainly this; *viz.* that the righteous, or ſincerely good, ſhall all ſhine as the *luminaries of heaven*, or as the *lights in the firmament*.

IF we refer the expreſſion, here uſed in the text, to the *faculties* and *endowments* of the *mind*, or to the ſpiritual and divine qualities of the ſaints in heaven, the meaning will be this, that, when the righteous are admitted to the very fountain of truth

* 1 John iii. 12.

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and excellence, they ſhall ſhine in knowledge and holineſs, in all intellectual and moral attainments. —And it is paſt all doubt, that the progreſſive and delightful exerciſe and improvement of the rational and mental powers, is the nobleſt image of the future bliſs, the very heaven of all intelligent Beings, whoſe pleaſures and enjoyments chiefly conſiſt in the contemplation of divine truth, in perfect holineſs, or rectitude of ſpirit, in the moſt pure and ſublime exerciſes of a rapturous zeal and devotion, and in a growing aſſimulation and conformity to the God and Father of the univerſe, in every excellence and perfection, ſo far as finite minds are capable of it.

But the expreſſion may have, at the ſame time, a farther reſpect to the *bodies of the ſaints*, which ſhall be formed, at the laſt day, into a reſemblance of Chriſt's glorified body: and of whom it is ſaid, when he was transfigured upon the holy mount, that *his face did ſhine as the ſun*, and *his raiment was white as the light* *. And, we find that the apoſtle, when he is ſpeaking of that glory with which all righteous and good men ſhall be inveſted at the reſurrection, makes uſe of the like compariſon to that in my text †. And who knows,—when our Saviour's triumph over death and the grave is perfected,—what a change ſhall be made in theſe vile bodies? which we are told, by the ſame apoſtle, ſhall be ſpiritual, glorious, and immortal, active, ſtrong, and vigorous, and never more ſubject to any corruption or decay.

Moſt certain it is, that the righteous ſhall be raiſed in glory, and ſhine with all due honour in the kingdom of God. That joyous happy day is haſtening on, when they ſhall be reſcued from the diſhonours of the grave, ſurrounded with a

* Matt. xvii. 2. † 1 Cor. xv. 41, &c.

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viſible luſtre, arrayed in heavenly ſplendor, and clothed with the robes of immortality.

It ſhould be obſerved here, that, as the term *righteous* is a *diſtinctive* character, and (taken in its ſimple abſtracted ſenſe, which I have already conſidered,) comprehends under it all virtuous and good men of every claſs; ſo what is here ſaid of them in the text, is *deſcriptive* of that honour which will be put upon them, *as ſuch*; that is; they ſhall ALL ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father; or, in the language of the prophet now cited, they ſhall *awake to everlaſting life*, to a ſtate of great dignity, dominion, and glory, whilſt *ſhame* and *everlaſting contempt* ſhall be the portion and lot of all the wicked and unbelieving world.

And yet, I muſt remark further,—that, though our Saviour, in theſe words, repreſents the honour of all righteous men in general, they are not ſo to be underſtood, as if there were no peculiar honours reſerved and allotted for good men hereafter, in proportion to their piety, virtue, and uſefulneſs in this world. The contrary ſeems rather implied in the paſſage I have referred to, where the prophet, by the help of an elegant and ſublime figure, raiſes our imaginations to ſome conception, or idea, of different *degrees* of bliſs and glory in the other world, which will be diſtributed according to the different ranks, or attainments of men, in this life.—Thoſe who have approved themſelves *faithful miniſters* and *teachers* in the chriſtian church, and have ſhone in the ſanctuary, as burning and ſhining lights, ſhall, no doubt, have an eminently glorious reward beſtowed upon them in the great day of retribution. So it is ſaid of the *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors*, in particular, and of thoſe who have not only inſtructed others by their doctrine, but con-

confirmed them in the truth by their example and ſufferings *.

CERTAIN it is, that the more good men do, whether it be in a more publick or private ſtation, the more they ſtudy, and endeavour to promote the common ſalvation, and ſerve the intereſts of mankind, the greater will be their glory, honour, and reward in heaven.

THE teachers of true religion, and all wiſe, holy, and good men, who now ſhine, as ſo many ſtars and lights to the glory of God in this world, ſhall then ſhine with greater degrees of luſtre, and the higheſt marks of honour.—Thoſe who have not only been eminently righteous and good themſelves, but have been inſtrumental in reclaiming and converting others, ſhall then ſhine as ſtars of a greater magnitude and luſtre; or, to uſe the ſtronger and brighter metaphor in my text, they ſhall hereafter ſhine forth as the *Sun, in the kingdom of their Father.*

OUR Saviour has expreſly aſſigned different degrees of miſery hereafter, to mens reſpective degrees of guilt †; and he will doubtleſs aſſign different degrees of glory and happineſs to the righteous, according to the improvements they have made in the preſent life. Perſons of uncommon zeal, of eminent ſanctity, and of a generous and diffuſive charity, ſhall be honoured above others ‡. *All the righteous* ſhall ſhine in ſplendour and glory, but the glory of ſome ſhall be *greater than that of others.* ——It is not enough (ſuch is the grace and munificence of our heavenly Father) that all righteous

* Rev. xx. 4, &c. † Luke xii. 47, 48.

‡ Even the heathen theology went ſo far as to transform thoſe great ſouls into divinities, who, being raiſed above the common rate of good men by their extraordinary virtues, had acquired the glorious name of *Heroes.* Hence ſprung the *apotheoſis* or *canonization* of Kings and Emperors, which began amongſt the Romans in the time of Auguſtus. Hor. Lib. I. Ode 12.

and

and good men ſhould be recompenced after this life, and enjoy an uninterrupted ſtate of happineſs, but there will be different degrees of honour and glory conferred upon them in thoſe many manſions which are prepared for them in the upper world. He, who is Prince of the Kings of the earth, is poſſeſſed of many vaſt and large dominions, and has various dignities to beſtow according to the ſeveral ſubordinate claſſes of his faithful ſervants here below. He has infinitely more in his gift than all the princes of this world. The loweſt and meaneſt upon earth may riſe very high in the kingdom of heaven. Many a ſervant will outſhine his maſter, and many a child his parent, and a thouſand ſubjects ſhall have a more glorious crown than the greateſt kings and potentates of this earth. And the ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to *miniſters* and their *people*. They ſhall be all treated, not only according to their diſtinctive characters, as righteous or wicked, but according to their improvement, or miſ-improvement, of the ſeveral advantages they have enjoyed, and the different talents which God has given them.

As to the *former*, we can make no doubt, but that their virtue, diligence, and fidelity, will meet with an ample recompence at the reſurrection of the juſt. Many of thoſe, whoſe light is now ſet as to us, will e'er long ſhine out with a brighter luſtre in the firmament above. We have this good hope concerning our *deceaſed Friend* and *Brother*, that, as he is now diſcharged from his miniſtry and ſervices in the church militant, he is gone to receive a full reward for his faithfulneſs to God and the ſouls of men, and for all his labours of love, wherever they have been ſtatedly or occaſionally employed, here or elſewhere. Methinks, I can now attend him in my thoughts, as well as others of my brethren, lately departed, to thoſe

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bleſſed manſions which are deſigned for all righteous and good men, all upright and faithful miniſters, in the kingdom of God, where there are many honours and preferments allotted, not only to the *Prophets* and *Evangeliſts*, to the *Apoſtles* and faithful *witneſſes of Jeſus*, and all thoſe who have ſteadily adhered to the rights of conſcience, and of religious and civil liberty, even unto the death; but to all *righteous men* and *miniſters* of *every claſs*, who have approved themſelves unto God, and maintained their purity and integrity, whether in a more private or publick ſtation. *They ſhall all ſhine as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father.*

As to my worthy and reverend brother Mr. FRANCIS BLACKMORE, I have had an agreeable connexion, and long acquaintance with him, and muſt therefore be allowed to bear my teſtimony to him, as one, who, I am verily perſwaded, was a righteous man, and a truly conſcientious and faithful miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt.—And, being a collegue, or fellow-pupil with him, at the ſame academy, in *Derbyſhire*, under the tuition of the late Doctor *Latham*, to whom he, and myſelf, and many others have been greatly indebted, who are now employed in the ſacred miniſtry, I cannot but make a remark upon his great virtue, ſobriety, and diligence there.—And when *He*, and his *Brother*, a fellow-ſtudent at the ſame place, were, after ſome years, removed to the *Univerſity* at GLASGOW, his piety and morals were the ſame, and his application to ſtudy and literature no way relaxed. They both received, at this eminent ſeat of erudition, the degree that is uſually given, as an encouragement to ſtudy and learning, and returned from thence qualified and furniſhed for great ſervice and uſefulneſs.

As to the late Mr. *Blackmore's progenitors*, I need only ſay, that he was the deſcendent and offſpring

of

of a father and grandfather, who both made a very conſiderable figure in the church *. And, how worthily he himſelf has appeared, as a miniſter and paſtor, in ſome reputable places †, and larger congregations, amongſt the proteſtant diſſenters, need not be ſaid. As to his labours here ‡, in the earlier part of life,—many or moſt of my advanced hearers, in this aſſembly, can eaſily recollect, to his honour and praiſe, the pains that he took to ſerve and promote their beſt intereſts. As to his occaſional miniſtrations, in other places, I cannot but obſerve, that they have been peculiarly acceptable, and ſpoken of with great approbation. And, as he did not ſpend his ſtrength and uſeful talents in vain, he is now gone to receive his reward, from that upright and impartial Judge, who has different crowns, and various honours, to beſtow upon his faithful ſervants §.

I would not attempt to exalt or emblazon any man's character; but this muſt be ſaid of our deceaſed friend, that he was a man, a miniſter, who truly feared God,—a man of rational piety, and great devotion. The latter has been particularly remarked by thoſe who knew him beſt.—And, that his habitual and ſtated courſe of life was under the influence of religious principles, I can make no

* His *Father* the Rev^d. Mr *Chewning Blackmore* was for many years the paſtor of a congregation of proteſtant diſſenters in the city of *Worceſter*; a truly valuable perſon, highly eſteemed by his brethren in the ſacred miniſtry, for his ſingular uſeful talents and abilities.——His grandfather Mr. *William Blackmore*, M. A. of *Lincoln* College in *Oxon*, was ſcribe to the provincial aſſembly at *London*, and for his loyalty to King *Charles* the Second in his exile, was impriſoned in the Tower, with Mr. *Love*, Mr. *Caſe*, and others, but had his patrole by means of his elder brother Sir *John Blackmore*; he was ejected from St. *Peter's Cornhill* by the act of uniformity, in 1662. See his character, and a further account of him in Dr. *Calamy*'s continuation, Vol. III.

† *Coventry* and *Worceſter*.

‡ *Eveſham, Worceſterſhire*.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 8.

doubt.

doubt. His family, as well as the publick, can witneſs to his good inſtructions, prayers, and councels. May *they*, as well as *others*, take his advice, and emulate all his virtues, following him as he followed Chriſt.

One thing I muſt ſay of him from mine own knowledge and a full perſuaſion, namely; that he was free from any undue attachments to the opinions of men in the affairs of religion; or, in other words, that he had a ſteady love to truth, and was impartial in his enquiries after it. He had an open mind, an honeſt heart, and a truly catholic and charitable ſpirit towards all good men of every denomination. And, I have often known him to lament, that, where there is an harmony of faith in the great and ſubſtantial points of chriſtian doctrine, there ſhould be any want of charity in matters of mere opinion.

In a word, I ſhould hardly do juſtice to his memory, if I did not apply to him every branch of the character, or deſcription, that has been given of the righteous man, in the preceding diſcourſe. And, I am perſwaded that, not only his ſurviving friends and relations here preſent, but all others, who have had any knowledge of him, will concur with me in what I have now ſaid, *giving honour to whom honour is due*.——But, I ſhall wave what might be further ſaid, and endeavour to make ſome improvement of this important ſubject in a few reflexions.

(1) Hence we ſhould learn to be very cautious how we paſs any raſh or precipitate judgment upon our fellow-creatures: or, in the language of the apoſtle, we ſhould *judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the counſels of the heart* *.——It is an eaſy thing, and nothing per-

* 1 Cor. iv. 5.

haps

haps is more common, than for the profeſſors of religion to be miſtaken and deceived in one another. And, conſidering the preſent ſtate of this world, in which, as I have obſerved, there is a great mixture and variety of outward characters and appearances, it is no wonder that the judgment or eſtimation which God forms of men, and that which we form of them is oftentimes very different. There are many dark and dazzling colours which are apt to caſt a miſt before our eyes, that we cannot eaſily diſcern between the righteous and the wicked in this life. We know but little of mens virtues or vices, and are therefore too apt to miſcall them. It ill becomes us, therefore, at any time, to paſs a raſh or poſitive judgment upon our fellow creatures, or too haſtily call their religious character in queſtion on the account of ſome viſible failures and tranſgreſſions. The infallible judgment of the heart belongs to God only, and not to ſuch limited and ſhort-ſighted creatures, as we are. And, where we have no ability, we can have no right to ſit in judgment upon any man's ſincerity.

If we view their faults in the worſt circumſtances of aggravation, we ſhould not be too haſty, or ſevere, in condemning them; and eſpecially when we recollect our own offences, and the many mitigations that may be offered in favour of them. As we do for ourſelves, we ſhould do by others, *excuſe* where we cannot *juſtify*; much leſs ſhould we take any undue methods to ſuppreſs what we may think error, or uſe any conſtraint or violence againſt conſcience.——To pronounce every error in the underſtanding, or every tranſgreſſion of the divine law, that our fellow-creatures may be guilty of, inconſiſtent with true piety, or a prevailing rectitude of ſoul, is not only to act out of the province which God has aſſigned us, but even to cancel and confound every religious character, and

utterly

utterly overthrow that fundamental diſtinction which will always ſubſiſt between the righteous and the wicked, and all good and bad men of every perſuaſion.

Nor ſhou'd the outward *appearances of providence* lead us to draw any haſty concluſions concerning our fellow-creatures. As we paſs together through the manifold changes of this mortal life, we ſhould be careful in examining ourſelves, but ſlow in judging and cenſuring others. The day of the Lord, the great and laſt day, will enlighten the darkeſt ſteps of providence, and ſatisfy all the world of the wiſdom and equity of his ways.—— And, as this ſhould prevent all raſh cenſures, ſo likewiſe all needleſs diſcouragements, whatever we may ſuffer at preſent by the ſcourge of malicious tongues and inveterate enemies.——Let us, my brethren, be *patient, until the Lord come*, and ſuſpend our judgment of preſent appearances till the final account, when *every dark thing will be made plain*, and *every crooked thing ſet ſtreight*.

(2) We may further learn, that all genuine and true religion is ſeated in the *heart* and *affections*, in a rectified will, or a well diſpoſed mind *. I conſider religion and righteouſneſs here, as convertible terms, which ſtand for one and the ſame thing:

* Religion is not a notion, but the frame and temper of our minds, the law of our actions, and the rule of our lives —No man is well ſettled in religion till it is become the ſelf-ſame thing with the reaſon of his mind.——The mind of a man is the beſt part of him, or what a man means is rather his action than what he does.——The principle of a new nature, and reconciliation with the law of God, is harmony with the law of righteouſneſs.—The rule with which a chriſtian complies is the right of the caſe: The principle of mind from whence he acts is the love of truth.—A ſincere heart is a great advantage towards orthodoxy of judgment.—That which God requires for religion is only internal good diſpoſitions and acts that are connatural to them. We are perfect in nothing but in an honeſt meaning, a ſincere and true intention. See Dr. *Whichcote*'s Aphoriſms.

for, what is righteouſneſs, but true religion as it is ſeated in the heart? or, what is true religion, but the fear of God, or that internal piety which is the beſt principle of univerſal righteouſneſs? the heart is the ſoil that produces and forms the moral character, whether it be good or bad. The ſeeds or firſt principles that are ſowed there produce either good or bad habits; and ſo far as they operate and prevail, they will influence and model the temper and life. What is righteouſneſs, but a healthy ſtate of ſoul? and where it ſhines out with a genuine luſtre, it is the chriſtian's trueſt ornament and glory. We ſhou'd always remember, that it is the deſign of the goſpel to reduce us to an obedience to thoſe eternal laws of righteouſneſs, under which we were made; or, that the goſpel conſtitution, the kingdom of God, under the Meſſiah, is eminently calculated, above any other inſtitution in the world, to encourage and promote righteouſneſs, or all moral virtue and goodneſs.

(3) We ſee here how much it concerns us, as ever we would receive the crown of righteouſneſs at laſt, or ſhine in the kingdom of God hereafter, to ſecure our title to it, by cultivating all thoſe holy and good diſpoſitions, which will qualify and fit us for this honour and felicity. Or, in other words, we ſee how much depends upon cultivating a truly religious and moral character, if we would not be found amongſt the wicked and reprobate in the day of judgment. The expreſs intention and view of our Saviour in uttering this parable, which ſets forth the preſent and future ſtate of the righteous and the wicked, is to put us upon preparing for that future judgment which will fix and determine our ſtate and condition for ever. This, indeed, is the great and ultimate view of all revelation, to promote virtue and righteouſneſs, or to make

make men holy and happy. And the chriſtian inſtitution, in particular, is deſigned to teach us, that, though after all we can do, we are *unprofitable ſervants*, yet, if we are ſincere, and do all that we can, we ſhall in no wiſe loſe our reward. *If there be a willing mind it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

It is only integrity of heart, or a prevailing ſincerity, that will render men the proper objects of the divine favour, when God will judge the world in righteouſneſs; nor is it poſſible for us to enjoy heaven without a heavenly diſpoſition, or without that temper and ſtate of mind which qualifies for it. We are told that the gueſt, who came without the wedding garment, was caſt into *outer darkneſs*, that is, not only ſhut out of the bride-chamber, as the unworthy gueſts were, but removed at the fartheſt diſtance from the light and glory of the upper world. (Mat. xxii. 13.)

If, then, we would ſhew ourſelves righteous before God, let us keep at the utmoſt diſtance from ſin: for *what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs?* we ſhould now walk, not as the ſervants of ſin, but as the ſervants of righteouſneſs, and always remember that every ſin, every wilful ſin, is a contradiction to the law of reaſon and revelation, or an attempt to controul and cancel all the eternal and immutable principles of righteouſneſs and truth. We ſhould all deeply fix it in our minds, that, as the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, ſo *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, or act contrary to the light they enjoy. (1 Cor. viii. 18.)

As there is nothing more *connatural* to a man's ſoul, we ſhould always deal ingenuouſly with *truth*, and love it for itſelf. And, if we really love it,

we ſhall be diligent and impartial in our enquiries after it. We ſhall adhere to it wherever we find it, and always pay a great regard to the judgment and conviction of our own minds. We ſhall endeavour to free ourſelves from all prevailing paſſions, from all vitious propenſities, and irregular affections, that our minds may be impartially diſpoſed to attend to the clear evidence of truth and duty, and to follow its directions. The higheſt reverence and regard is certainly due to *religious truth*. We ſhould not only carefully ſearch after it, but live up to it, and always remember that, *not to obey the* truth, is the ſame thing as to *obey unrighteouſneſs* *, that all pride and prepoſſeſſion is an enemy to truth, that hypocriſy is the bane of all true piety, that a mere ſpeculative faith, which is not a principle of life, is a nullity in religion, and utterly unavailable to any man's ſalvation.

If therefore we would be approved of God, if we would be happy in the enjoyment of ourſelves, happy here, and happy for ever, let us preſerve our integrity in all circumſtances, and under the ſevereſt trials. Are we told that the name of the wicked ſhall rot, while the memory of the juſt is bleſſed? that the righteous hath hope in his death, whilſt the hypocrite's hope ſhall periſh? let us follow after righteouſneſs, perſevere in well doing, and labour to excel in every virtue. That we may not deceive ourſelves, let us look well to our ſincerity in the ſight of God, and always give that evidence and proof of it, which will *aſſure our hearts before him*, and ſupport a humble and well grounded confidence in the divine mercy. Which leads me to another reflection.

(4) THIS ſubject may be improved as a ground of conſolation and ſupport to all virtuous and good

* Rom. ii. 8.

men,

men, under the difficulties and diſcouragements which they often meet with in this world. To this end, we ſhould often bring into view, not only the different condition of the righteous and the wicked hereafter, but the preſent and future ſtate of the righteous themſelves. We ſhould endeavour to poſſeſs our minds with a belief of this great and comfortable truth, that the time is coming when good men will be diſtinguiſhed infinitely to their advantage, whatever diſcouragements they may happen to meet with in the preſent world.

THEIR beauty may be darkened and eclipſed, ſometimes by their own weakneſſes and infirmities, ſometimes by the frowns and rebukes of providence, ſometimes by the malicious accuſations and ill-treatment of the world, and, upon various accounts, their piety and virtue, their honour and integrity, may be now ſlighted and overlooked; but they ſhall hereafter ſhine forth as the ſun, or they ſhall appear with honour and diſtinction in the other world, whatever appearance they may have made in this.

THOUGH the righteous man, as to his true and intrinſick character, is *more excellent than his neighbour*, he may not always *appear* to be ſo, and may be even deſtitute of ſome good qualities which the unrighteous man and the hypocrite are poſſeſſed of. Or, his light may not always ſhine out to advantage, or make the beſt appearance in the eyes of the world. His virtues may be tarniſhed by ſome particular frailties and imperfections. His conduct, in ſome inſtances, may be faulty and imprudent, or, in other inſtances, it may be miſtaken, miſconſtrued, and aggravated; but the time is coming when every real, or imaginary ſtain and blemiſh, ſhall be wiped off, when every miſtake ſhall be rectified, every wrong ſuſpicion, and every falſe ſurmiſe refuted. His righteouſneſs hereafter ſhall appear and ſhine forth as the *noon day*, or as the *Sun*, when it breaks

forth from behind the *dark cloud which overſhadowed it.*

Or, the all-wiſe God in the courſe of his providence, may bring upon the righteous many temporal croſſes and diſappointments: they may be caſt into the furnace of affliction: they may be in low and deſpiſed circumſtances; or ſuffer in thoſe calamities which are brought upon a people for the wickedneſs of others. But, if they continue faithful in the day of trial, and ſerve God with an upright heart, and a pure conſcience, he will reward their faith, and patience, and conſtancy of mind, with the clear and undoubted tokens of his favour and acceptance.

Again, the wicked may put the righteous under an ill character which they no way deſerve, and lay to their charge things which they know not: but, in due time, God will roll away every reproach that may be now caſt upon them. He will clear up their innocence and integrity, if not in this world, yet in the great and laſt day, when they ſhall all ſhine forth as the ſun in the firmament of heaven.—And this may well ſupport the righteous man, under any of the unjuſt cenſures that he may now meet with from his fellow-creatures. He may comfort himſelf, as the apoſtle did in a like caſe, with this reflexion, "He that judgeth me is the Lord." (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) His reputation ſhall be no longer ſullied, and every dark ſhade, or falſe colouring, that has been thrown over it ſhall then vaniſh and diſappear.

Or, if the righteous ſhould ſometimes ſuffer perſecution, in the cauſe of God, the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, their ſufferings here will bear no proportion to that *glory which ſhall be revealed in them.* They ſhall hereafter be vindicated from every unrighteous accuſation, from every falſe charge, or foul reproach, which ignorance and bigotry, or pride and malice, had ever brought upon them.

them——This honour have all the ſaints: or, this is the honour that God, the righteous Judge of the world, will hereafter put upon all his faithful ſervants. Whatever, contemptuous, or ill treatment, they may now meet with, they ſhall be owned and approved of God, and ſtand acquitted at his bar. As the ſun in the heavens is ſometimes obſcured by miſts and clouds, ſo is the righteous man by aſperſion, calumny, and ſlander: but, as that glorious luminary does by its mighty effulgence and efficacy ſcatter them all at laſt, ſo ſhall the righteous and good man ſoon ſurmount and overcome all his difficulties: his integrity and virtue will appear, and ſhine like the ſun, in its meridian brightneſs, with full ſplendor and beauty.

I MAY add, that the moſt excellent and worthy character may be ſometimes concealed under the veil of a *humble* and *virtuous modeſty*. The virtues of ſome would make a diſtinguiſhing figure, and create admiration, if they were brought out of obſcurity. And this may be the caſe, no doubt, with many righteous and good men, who may be now held in little or no eſtimation. Thoſe who are about them may not diſcern their excellencies, or they may fail in that reſpect which is due to real merit. But, when they enter into that kingdom where righteouſneſs dwells, it will fare quite otherwiſe with them. Every modeſt, humble, and upright man, who lives in retirement and obſcurity, and is little known or noticed by thoſe about him, ſhall then appear with marks of diſtinguiſhed honour; not only thoſe, whoſe virtues now ſhine out with a brighter luſtre, ſhall then be applauded, but thoſe of a lower claſs whoſe acts of piety and charity have been ſecret and unknown, ſhall then meet with all due honour and praiſe. Theſe ſhall not always be concealed, but be brought upon the publick ſtage; and that God who *ſeeth in ſecret ſhall reward them openly*.

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In a word, the righteous may now ſorrow, and mourn, and grieve on various accounts: but they ſhall then rejoice, even as the huſbandman rejoices when the harveſt comes, and a plentiful crop more than rewards all his toil and labour. Joy and gladneſs ſhall as ſurely ſpring up to the righteous, as the corn or winter ſeedneſs after it has been long buried under the clods, will, by the powers of vegetation, ſhoot forth and grow up into a rich and plentiful encreaſe.

May we all thus learn to impreſs our minds with this important truth in the text, and with the certain hope and aſſurance which our Lord here gives us, as to the honourable and happy ſtate of all righteous and good men hereafter. O how great will be the reward ſet before us! How great will be the honour and joy to receive a crown of righteouſneſs from the righteous Judge! Think what it is to dwell for ever in the preſence of God, to be admitted to the very fountain of light and truth, to dwell with *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, and all the wiſe, the holy, and the good, in every age of the world; to be making continual improvements in wiſdom and goodneſs, and to drink of the rivers of intellectual and divine pleaſure for evermore. O how tranſporting a ſcene is this! what tongue can expreſs, or heart conceive, the full extent and perfection of the future glory, and bleſſedneſs of the ſaints, in heaven!—And think, again, on the other hand, how ſad, how afflictive, beyond all expreſſion, it will be, to fall ſhort of this honour and happineſs in the other world, and be thruſt into outer darkneſs. Good God! what a trifle is all the honour or diſgrace of the preſent life, compared with the honour or infamy of the laſt day! Settle your minds, then, in the firm belief, and be often thinking, of that grand *Epiphany*, when the Son of Man ſhall come in his glory, with all the

the holy angels, to raiſe the dead, and to execute judgment upon all mankind. Surely, this would be no unprofitable, or painful exerciſe, if we did but accuſtom our thoughts to it.——We are told, by the apoſtle, that this is that *bleſſed* and *glorious Advent*, which all the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus are now waiting for, with a pleaſing expectation and joyful hope *: for he ſhall then come to be *glorified in his ſaints and admired in all them that believe*. This is the happy and joyous day—when the righteous and the good ſhall be all exalted, rewarded, and dignified with a crown of glory, that ſhall far out-ſhine the ſtate and grandeur of earthly monarchs,—when the ſons of God, the brethren of Chriſt, ſhall be all made manifeſt, and ſhall all appear with him in glory. Imagine to yourſelves with what exulting joy they will then welcome the reſurrection, the general appearance of all the dead, and triumph in it; when they ſhall all meet together, and ſtand about the throne, with every tongue, and every heart, full of joy and praiſe. O how great! how aſtoniſhing, will be the gladneſs and the glory of that day, when they ſhall all join in one common ſong to him that ſits upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever!

(5) The laſt inference I would draw from the ſubject we have been conſidering is this, that, "in order to promote the ſpirit and practice of true religion and righteouſneſs, it muſt be our wiſdom and intereſt often to advert, in our moſt ſerious and retired moments, to the great and laſt day, or to the different ſtates of good and bad men, at the end of the world." You have already heard what is the diſtinctive character of the righteous. And you would do well to reflect, that this is the foundation of that viſible diſtinction which will be

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

made

made in favour of them, in the future judgment. —This is a point of the laſt importance, and what claims and deſerves our moſt ſerious attention and regard. And, God grant, that what has been ſaid may have this happy and bleſſed effect, to make us honeſt and upright men, and ſincere chriſtians. —Is the day of God haſtening on, that awful and ſolemn day, which will put an everlaſting period to the preſent ſtate of things? How ſollicitous ſhou'd we all be, to ſecure our title to that bliſsful inheritance, and to all thoſe ſhining honours, which await the children of God, the children of the reſurrection! The great Sovereign and Judge of the world will then make it to appear that he hates iniquity and loves righteouſneſs; that he is not an indifferent ſpectator, and witneſs, to the behaviour and conduct of mankind; and that, as he now beholds the upright with a peculiar pleaſure, he will then make known his ſalvation, and openly diſplay his righteouſneſs, in the face of the world. The Son of Man, our appointed Lord and Judge, will not always conceal himſelf from the eyes of men. The time is coming when he will make himſelf conſpicuous to all, and be revealed from heaven with a divine majeſty, and in the greateſt glory. That illuſtrious day, when his glory ſhall be revealed, will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

And, would we all find acceptance with that omniſcient Being, who knows every man's heart, and is perfectly acquainted with every man's true and real character, let us now purge our hearts from all corrupt affections, and bring forth the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God. Let us, remember, that, as we ſow here, we ſhall reap hereafter; and that, if we have our fruit unto holineſs and righteouſneſs now, the end will be everlaſting life. Do we

all

all know that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? And is that awful day approaching, when he will reward and puniſh every man according as his works have been? Let us not deceive ourſelves, but behave as reaſonable and immortal Beings ſhould do, who are now placed in a ſtate of trial for eternity. Let us take care that we be not found under the dominion of any ſin, or under any reigning impurity of heart and life. Let us keep ourſelves unſpotted from the world, and be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke. Let us ſtrive to excell in every virtue, and to ſhine as ſo many lights in *this world*, that we may hereafter ſhine forth as the ſun in the *kingdom of heaven*. And let thoſe, in particular, who enjoy the light of the goſpel, always remember this, that it will be far more tolerable in the day of judgment, to have been *wicked Heathens*, than *wicked Chriſtians*.

To conclude, as we all profeſs to believe in Chriſt whom God hath ſent; let us fix it upon our minds that he will as ſurely come, and appear a ſecond time, as he did at firſt * ;—that, as he was once manifeſted to take away our ſins by the ſacrifice of himſelf, he will e'er long come again, to the ſalvation and joy of all them that believe in him. He that ſhall come will come, in the proper ſeaſon, and his reward with him.—This then ſhould be the higheſt mark of our ambition, the center of all our deſires, that we may be accepted of him in that day. This ſhould be our daily, inceſſant labour, and endeavour, that we may be *ſincere and without offence unto the day of Chriſt*; that, by a proper watchfulneſs, a becoming care and diligence, we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blame. As we now *call upon the Father who, with-*

* John xiv. 3.

out

out respect of persons, will judge according to every man's work, let *us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.* Let us *be sober, and hope unto the end, for the grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that, when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy* *.

THE exclamation following my text, intimates, that truths of greater importance cannot be uttered, than those which respect the final misery of the wicked, and the inconceivable happiness of the righteous;—and that all, who have the faculty of reason, ought to regard them with a becoming attention, and consider their own concern in them. I therefore conclude this discourse, as our Saviour himself concludes that instructive parable wherein is my text. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

* See 1 Pet. i. 13, 17. ch. iv. 13. ch. v. 1.

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THE END.